

HISTORICAL FOLKLORE CHALLENGE

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In the small north-German hamlet of Dustig-am-See, now long-since absorbed by the industrial sprawl of Bremerhoben, oral historian Joseph Liedermeyer records the following planting chant and children's rhyme (circa 1530), in celebration of the sowing of row upon row of corn, brought over the Atlantic during the Columbian Exchange, the remarkable fortitude of which allowed it to thrive in almost any ground, even in the tarry bogs that historically surrounded Dustig, thus granting the village a new industry and even modest renown through the end of the Holy Roman Empire:

ORIGINAL VERSE IN DIALECT

“Trieb’!, Leinmais!
Trieb’!, Leinmais!
Sie auch Teer ramm’!
Sie auch Teer ramm’!”

LOOSE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

“Sprout, corn, in your rows!
Sprout, corn, in your rows!
You grow, even through tar!
You grow, even through tar!”

The challenge: Dustig-am-See and the work of Joseph Liedermeyer have little to no modern renown or internet presence, and only two copies of his seminal monograph on medieval agricultural lore and folk culture appear outside of private collections. Furthermore, the dialect of Northern Low German (or Southern High German, or just possibly Sideways German) in which the chant was written is no longer in use. Even Liedermeyer was only able to discover what he did by tracking down the Dutch pirates that had sold the village maize (for which they charged a buck-an-ear). Send in to the author the remainder of the peasant chant, with English translation, by next week, to win no prize at all. ■